

REMARKS

Consideration of the above-identified application in view of the foregoing amendments and following remarks is respectfully requested.

A. Status of the Claims and Explanation of Amendments

Claims 1-32 are pending. Each of the previously pending claims was found to be novel over the prior art. However, the office action rejected the claims pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,494,776 to Molbak (“Molbak”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,730,272 to Dobbins et al. (“Dobbins”) and further in view of US 2002/0100660 to Stieber et al. (“Stieber”). [8/16/07 Office Action at pp. 2-4].

By this paper, independent claims 1, 8, 14 and 27 are amended to recite, *inter alia*, the processing means responds to an alarm signal by modifying the acceptance criteria “to a restricted acceptance window, which excludes lower and upper safety margins.”

Support for these amendments is found throughout the application as originally filed, including for example pages 5-6 and figure 4. No new matter will be added to this application by entry of these amendments. Entry is requested.

B. Claims 1-32 are Patentably Distinct from Molbak, Dobbins and Stieber

The rejection of claims 1-32 as allegedly being obvious over Molbak, Dobbins and Stieber is respectfully traversed. A primary reference, Molbak, is said to

disclose a network of three acceptors as recited in Applicants' claims. A secondary reference, Dobbins, is said to disclose sensing means and processing means as recited in Applicants' claims. A tertiary reference, Stieber, is said to disclose Applicants' communication means in paragraphs 15, 16 and 26.

Applicants submit that these references share the same deficiencies when compared with the pending claims. Said simply, the references, taken singly or in combination, fail to teach, disclose or suggest "processing means [] configured to respond to an alarm signal, received by said communication means, to modify the acceptance criteria to a restricted acceptance window, which excludes lower and upper safety margins" as recited in Applicants' independent claim 1. As such, there can be no proper Section 103 rejection. See MPEP § 2143.03.

Specifically, Applicants' claim 1 recites:

"1. A system for accepting money items or the like, the system comprising:

a network; and

a plurality of first, second and third acceptors in communication with one another via the network,

each acceptor comprising

sensing means for sensing parameters of an item submitted to the acceptor,

processing means for determining acceptability of the item submitted to the acceptor in the basis of an acceptance criteria using the parameters thereof sensed by the sensing means, and

communication means, associated with the processing means, for sending alarm signals from the acceptor and receiving alarm signals from other acceptors, via the network,

wherein the processing means is configured to respond to a condition indicative of a fraud attempt by sending an alarm signal to a plurality of other acceptors using said communication means and

wherein the processing means is configured to respond to an alarm signal, received by said communication means via the network, to modify the acceptance criteria to a restricted acceptance window, which excludes lower and upper safety margins.”

It is undisputed that Molbak fails to disclose Applicants’ processing means.

See 8/16/07 Office Action at p. 3 (“Molbak does not expressly disclose ... processing means [], said processing means sending an alarm upon detection of a fraud attempt”) ¹ The office action asserts that Dobbins discloses such a processing means at column 2, lines 14-18 and column 7, lines 1-59. See 8/16/07 Office Action at p. 3

Dobbins is directed to a method for improved coin, bill and other currency acceptance and slug or counterfeit rejection. Among the aspects described by Dobbins are:

- Modifying the configuration of the coin acceptance criteria to achieve an acceptably high level of coin acceptance while improving slug rejection;
- Preventing fraud by temporarily changing coin acceptance criteria when a potential fraud attempt is detected; and
- Minimizing the effects of counterfeit coins and slugs on the self-adjustment process for a coin acceptance window while automatically adjusting to compensate for changing environmental conditions. [Column 2, lines 10-21].

¹ The Office Action has not alleged that Stieber alleviates this deficiency. As discussed *infra* at page 16 it does not.

The discussion in column 7 relied upon by the Office Action relates to the first aspect of Dobbins disclosure, i.e., “Improved Definition of Coin Acceptance Criteria.” [Column 6, lines 54-55]. This aspect of Dobbins does not address the appropriate response to an individual instance of fraud or attempted fraud (which is, however, addressed by the second and third aspects).

Returning to the first aspect of Dobbins relied upon by the Office Action, at column 7, Dobbins describes empirical data obtained for various foreign coins that were compared with legitimate U.S. currency, and suggests that a better method of defining acceptance criteria by taking into account “interrelationships” between various coin acceptance criteria, such as material, thickness, diameter, etc. [Column 7, lines 39-59]. As subsequently discussed, data for valid currency is used to create a “cluster” of acceptance values that accurately accept valid currency. [Column 7, line 60 – Column 8, line 46].

A graphical representation of the improved coin acceptance criteria is shown in Figure 4 (reproduced below):

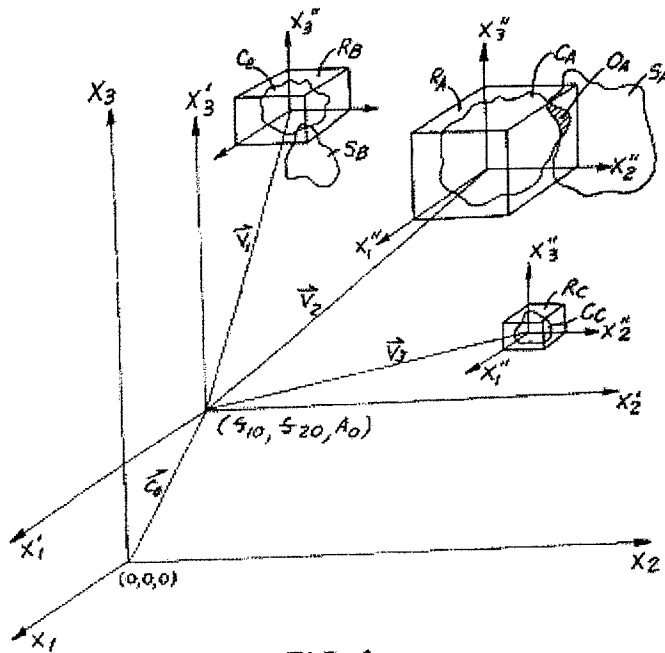


FIG. 4

Dobbins addresses the need to “minimize slug acceptance.” [Column 8, line 47]. Dobbins suggests that an area of the acceptance region C_A for a valid coin is removed where it overlaps with a region S_A for a counterfeit coin. [Column 8, lines 47-52]. The region to be removed is selected not only because of the overlap with the counterfeit coin, but also because of the “very low frequency of occurrence for valid coins.” [Column 8, lines 52-53]. This improved coin acceptance criteria is based on historical information that is stored in a look-up table (i.e., the initial calibration and tuning of the device). [Column 9, lines 1-13 and 42-51]. These data are not varied in response to fraud attempts, but may be varied to compensate for changes in “temperature, humidity, component wear and the like.” [Column 9, lines 51-53].

This aspect of Dobbins disclosure fails to teach, disclose or suggest a “processing means” that is “configured to respond to an alarm signal, received by said communication means via the network, to modify the acceptance criteria to a restricted acceptance window, which excludes lower and upper safety margins” as recited in Applicants’ claim 1.

Applicants note that another aspect of Dobbins’ disclosure – not relied upon by the Office Action – does relate to “anti-fraud and anti-cheat.” [Column 9, line 65]. Dobbins asserts that by repeatedly inputting fraudulent coins, the self-adjustment feature of some coin, bill and other currency acceptance devices can be used to move the coin acceptance window (CAW) toward the invalid coin. [Column 9, line 66 – column 10, line 3 and lines 61-65; column 11, lines 28-33]. The CAW of valid coins is “defined by symmetrical limits ‘+3’ and ‘-3’ around the center point ‘0’ of the genuine coin distribution.” [Column 11, lines 52-56]. To avoid this problem, Dobbins sets a “cheat mode flag” when a marginal, but acceptable coin is found. The operation of this aspect of Dobbins disclosure is shown in Figure 8 flow chart (reproduced below):

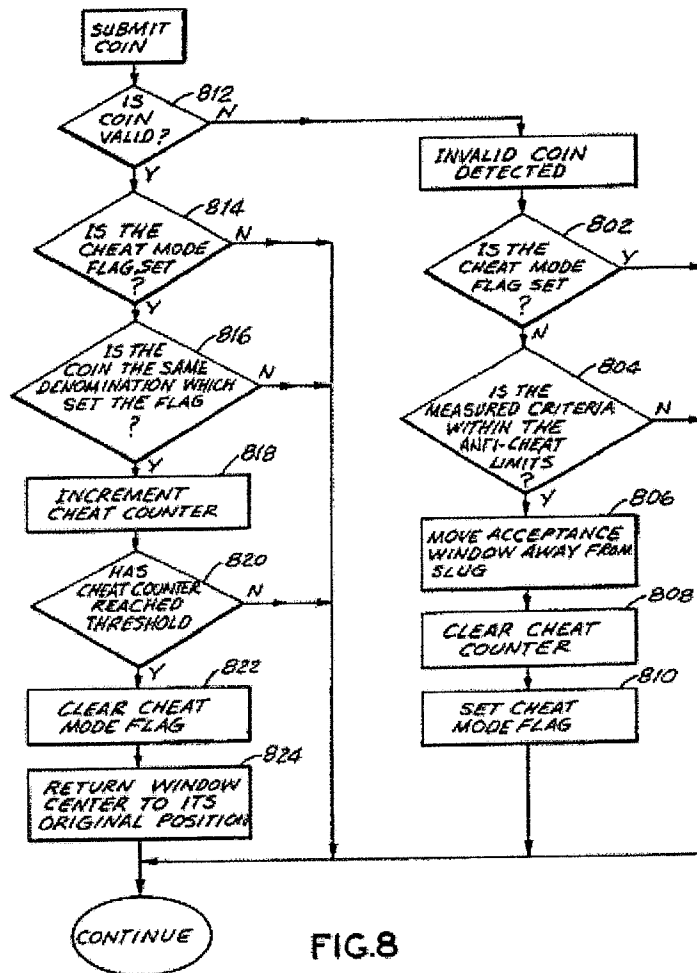


FIG.8

While this cheat mode flag is set, the CAW is shifted away from the “near miss” coin:

“[A] determination is made whether the invalid coin fits within the ‘near miss’ area, ‘z’ between ‘3’ and ‘4’ on FIG. 7A (block 804). If the answer to that inquiry is yes, the system moves the center of the coin acceptance window a preset amount away from the invalid coin distribution curve (block 806). For example, with reference to FIG. 7A, the center of the coin acceptance window is moved from ‘0’ to ‘-1’.” [Column 11, lines 59-66].

Alternatively, one of the boundaries may be moved. [Column 11, line 67 – Column 12, line 1]. Once the requisite number of acceptable coins is received, the CAW is moved based to its original position. [Column 12, lines 15-19].

This aspect of Dobbins disclosure fails to teach, disclose or suggest a “processing means” that is “configured to respond to an alarm signal, received by said communication means via the network, to modify the acceptance criteria to a restricted acceptance window, which excludes lower and upper safety margins” as recited in Applicants’ claim 1.

Stieber was cited by the Office Action because of its alleged disclosure of Applicants’ communication means. There is no allegation in the office action that Stieber discloses the “processing means” as recited in Applicants’ claim 1. Applicants cannot find in Stieber any discussion of fraud detection or modifying acceptance criteria. Thus, Stieber – like Molbak and Dobbins – fails to teach, disclose or suggest Applicants’ “processing means” that is “configured to respond to an alarm signal, received by said communication means via the network, to modify the acceptance criteria to a restricted acceptance window, which excludes lower and upper safety margins” as recited in Applicants’ claim 1.

Moreover, there is a further deficiency in the Office Action. Specifically, Applicants continue to believe that the office action’s allegation that Stieber discloses

Applicants' communication means is incorrect and unwarranted.² Stieber is focused on network communication using the Bluetooth specification, in which networked devices operate in a piconet having a single "master" device (base cash handling device 12) and a plurality of "slave" devices (peripheral devices 13, 18, 20, 22). [Stieber, ¶¶ 24-26].

In such a Bluetooth network, slave devices (e.g., peripheral cash handling device (13)) are unable to communicate with anything other than the single master device (base cash handling device (12)). Slave devices do not and cannot communicate directly with another slave device. It is incorrect to assert, as the office action does, that Stieber teaches a network of currency acceptors which communicate back and forth between each other. Instead, administrative data is transfer to the base cash handling device (12), i.e., the master device, from each individual peripheral device (13, 18, 20, 22), i.e., the slave devices. The claimed feature of sending alarm signals to prevent fraud is not disclosed by Stieber, and certainly not between individual of the peripheral devices.

The office action notes the alleged disclosure of transceivers (24) in the automatic cash handling device (12) and in the cash handling device (13) as shown in Figure 2-3. From this, the office action argues there is two-way communication between those devices. [8/16/07 Office Action at p. 5]. This interpretation does not address the relevant point. Assuming *arguendo* that the master device (12) and the slave device (13) are capable of two-way communication with each other, there still is no teaching, disclosure or suggestion of communication between the slave devices themselves.

² The office action concedes that Molbak fails to disclose this feature. [See 8/16/07 Office Action at p. 2]. There is no allegation that Dobbins discloses this feature.

As such, Stieber teaches away from the subject matter of Applicants' claim 1, i.e., whereby first, second and third acceptors in a communication network can all transmit an alarm signal to a plurality of other acceptors upon detecting a fraud attempt. Stieber teaches an entirely different type of communication network. Paragraph 8 of Stieber relates purely to the transmission capability of the base cash handling device (12) (master device in Bluetooth network). All of Stieber's other devices (i.e., anything but the master device), are restricted to transmissions to one other device (the master).

Referring to paragraph 27 of Stieber, it is disclosed that the only other cash handler (13) in the network is configured to act as a slave and is therefore prevented from communication "with a central controller as well as other cash handling machines" for the reasons explained above.

Accordingly, with the network of Stieber, it would not be possible to achieve the immediate alarm signal transmission, due to the inability of the slave devices (13, 18, 20, 22) to transmit to anything other than the single master device (base cash handling unit 12).

There is no disclosure or suggestion that data transferred from a peripheral device to the base cash handling device would be retransmitted by the base cash handling device (12) to other peripheral units, as would be essential if other peripheral devices were to receive an alarm signal.

Accordingly, as Applicants cannot find these elements of claim 1 in Molbak, Dobbins and Stieber, at least independent claim 1 respectfully is asserted to be

in condition for allowance. For at least similar reasons, independent claims 8, 14, 21 and 27, and dependent claims 2-7, 9-13, 15-20, 22-26 and 28-32 also are asserted to be in condition for allowance.


Applicants have chosen in the interest of expediting prosecution of this patent application to distinguish the cited documents from the pending claims as set forth above. These statements should not be regarded in any way as admissions that the cited documents are, in fact, prior art. Likewise, Applicants have chosen not to swear behind Molbak and Stieber, both cited by the office action, or to otherwise submit evidence to traverse the rejection at this time. Applicants, however, reserve the right, as provided by 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.131 and 1.132, to do so in the future as appropriate. Finally, Applicants have not specifically addressed the rejections of the dependent claims. Applicants respectfully submit that the independent claims, from which they depend, are in condition for allowance as set forth above. Accordingly, the dependent claims also are in condition for allowance. Applicants, however, reserve the right to address such rejections of the dependent claims in the future as appropriate.

CONCLUSION

For the above-stated reasons, this application is respectfully asserted to be in condition for allowance. An early and favorable examination on the merits is requested. In the event that a telephone conference would facilitate the examination of this application in any way, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the number provided.

THE COMMISSIONER IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO CHARGE ANY ADDITIONAL FEES WHICH MAY BE REQUIRED FOR THE TIMELY CONSIDERATION OF THIS AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 AND 1.17, OR CREDIT ANY OVERPAYMENT TO DEPOSIT ACCOUNT NO. 13-4500, ORDER NO. 1193-4049.

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